

PASTORAL
ADVICE
TO
YOUNG PERSONS
BEFORE
CONFIRMATION

THE NINTH EDITION.

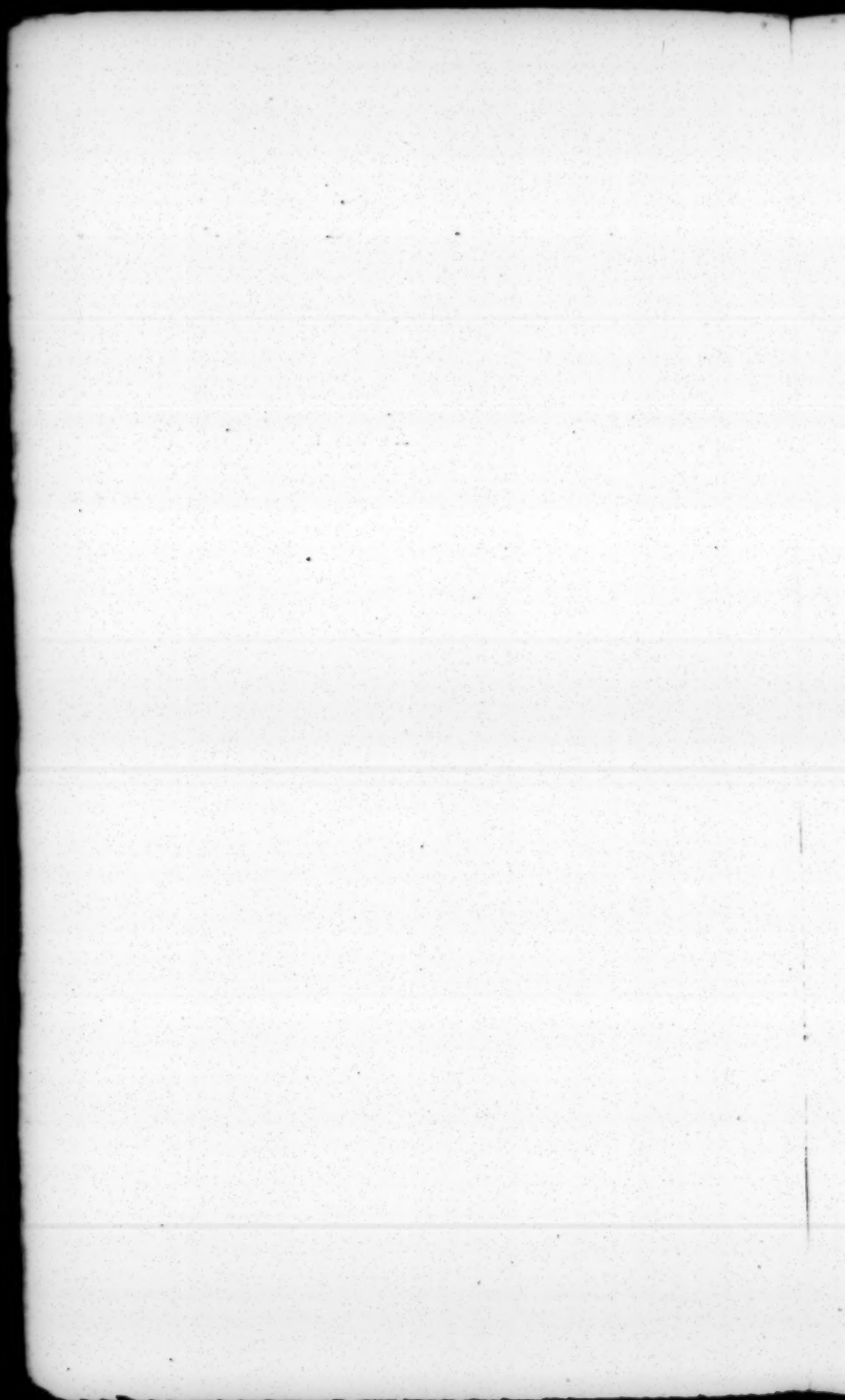


2.

SHREWSBURY:

Printed by J. EDDOWES; and sold by J. RIVINGTON, Bookseller to the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge, at No. 62, in St. Paul's Church Yard, LONDON, 1773.

[Price 2d, or 12s. per Hundred.]



PASTORAL ADVICE, &c.

YO U are now called, my young friends, to perform a duty of great consequence in the religious life ; and it is my desire, as well as my duty, to assist you in preparing for it.

If you have read over the office of Confirmation, in your Common Prayer Book, you have seen that the design of it is, on your part, to renew and ratify the covenant that was made for you at your baptism ; and to take upon yourselves that vow and promise which was then made in your name. It is called Confirmation, from your then confirming what your God-fathers and God-mothers did for you.

You are now become capable of thinking and acting for yourselves. And sure the first thing you ought to think of, is, what you were brought into this world to do ; what the will of God concerning you is ; and what part you are to act, in order to secure his blessing and favour both here and hereafter. This is what Religion teaches, and what you have been learning from your infancy. You are now to reflect seriously on the instructions you have received from your parents, masters, and ministers. And if you hearken to their advice, and resolve to lead a godly and a christian life, (as I hope all of you do,)

do,) you are here in the most solemn manner to declare it, before God and his Church.

This then is a critical and important period of your life. The duty you are here called to, is to be done but once; and on the well-doing of it, may very much depend your whole happiness, both in this life and the next. Let it then be well considered what you are now doing. You are going to profess yourselves Christians; to enter into a solemn covenant with the God that made you, the Lord of Heaven and Earth; who hath already called you into the kingdom of his dear Son, into his Church and Family here; and invites you to be partakers of his kingdom of glory hereafter: and to whom therefore you here offer and present yourselves, a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to him: devoting, from this time, all the powers of your mind and body to his service, and promising that you will walk worthy of this holy vocation, and as becometh the Gospel of Christ.

Consider then, what it is to be a true Christian. It is to abstain from every kind, from all appearance of evil; and to perfect holiness in the fear of God. It is to keep yourselves unspotted from the world, holy, sober, chaste, and undefiled; as members of Christ's mystical body, and temples of the Holy Ghost. It is to be followers of Christ, as dear children; to take up his cross; to resist temptations; to endure afflictions as good soldiers of Jesus Christ; to renounce all worldly pleasure, honour, and profit, when your duty calls to it; and to live,
not

not like those who have hope in this life only, but as travellers to a better country, and whose treasure, whose hope, and heritage, is in the kingdom of Heaven.

All this is implied on your part, in the act of Confirmation. It is a solemn dedication of yourselves to God and Virtue. As you were baptized into the christian Church, by the care of your parents, you now become members of it from knowledge and choice. You take Christ for your Lord and Master; and his Gospel for the rule of your life, and the foundation of all your hopes. You accept with joy and thankfulness, the privileges conferred upon you at baptism, and the gracious terms of pardon, peace, and eternal life, which are held out to you in the Gospel. You beg the assistance of God's Grace and Holy Spirit, to confirm and strengthen your good resolutions, and promise, as you expect his mercy and favour, all holy obedience to his will in all things.

This then, is a time for you to look around and consider. You are now in the hands of your own counsel. Eternity is before you. And it is left to your own choice, whether to be happy or miserable for ever. God hath given you the light of his Gospel to walk by; hath forewarned you what you are to hope and fear; hath shewn you the dangers to which you are exposed, and the means to avoid them; hath entered you early in a course of piety and virtue; hath given you already all things pertaining to life and godliness: and it will

therefore be your own fault if you bring his curse upon you and not a blessing. He hath this day set before you good and evil, life and death eternal; and whether of them liketh you shall be given you.

Do you then believe these things? I know that you believe them. Do you resolve to keep God's holy commandments, and to walk in them all the days of your life? I know that you resolve to do this. I know that when you think on the great mercies which God hath bestowed upon you; the great things which our Saviour Christ hath done and suffered for you; your hearts burn within you, and you think that nothing will be able to separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. But alas, when you come to mix with the world, all these resolutions will be apt to fail you. Other cares and concerns will get possession of your minds: and amidst the noise and tumult, the labour and business, the pleasures and amusements of life, you will be yet apt to forget God that made, and the Lord that bought you. You may, in the morning of life, receive the seed of the word with joy, and it may spring up and endure for a while; but when the sun is up, and temptations have gathered strength, it may yet be scorched and withered away. How many do we see who profess to believe all these great truths, and yet forget them in practice? How many, who were once in the same happy situation that you are in at present, have fallen from grace; and after they had known the way of righteousness and tasted the good word of God,

God, and the powers of the world to come, have yet turned away from the holy commandment delivered unto them; and having begun in the Spirit, have yet ended in the Flesh!

This is a sad consideration, and a melancholy proof of the corruption and deceitfulness of the human heart. And this consideration should alarm your fears, and put you upon inquiring, by what means you may best increase your spiritual strength, and fortify yourselves against the temptations that you are to encounter. And this is the great business to which it is my principal design at present to direct your thoughts and attention.

Observe then, that good resolutions are not enough to make you good men. It is not in your power to make yourselves on a sudden, as good and as virtuous as you please. Good habits must be formed by labour and exercise. The art of living must be acquired like every other useful art, with pains and industry. You must lay down some plan and course of life, some rules for the government of yourselves; for the improvement of your virtue; and for guarding against sin: and these must be invariably observed, if you would preserve your innocence, or deserve the character or name of Christians.

Many are the difficulties that you are to contend with, and the dangers that lie in your way. You are going into the world with little knowledge or experience of it, at an age when the mind is full

of confidence, and of hopes that will certainly deceive you : when the passions are strong, and your reason and judgment still weak. You will see many bad examples before you, and some perhaps among those whom you love and esteem ; who, without designing any harm, may seduce you into sin, and bring you into the same condemnation with themselves. You will see swearing, drunkenness and lewdness but little discouraged, and religion and piety but little countenanced, by the practice or conversation of men. Every condition and circumstance of life, will bring some temptation along with it. Your table may become a snare, and your wealth and health an occasion of falling. And besides these temptations from without, you have much to fear within ; from your own weakness and the deceitfulness of your own hearts. Your senses and appetites may call for sinful indulgences. Your thoughts and imagination, if not carefully watched over, will themselves become sinful by wandering in the fields of forbidden pleasure. Lust and sensual pleasure may instill a sweet poison into the mind, and lay all its good resolutions asleep. Anger, pride, ambition, envy, will often be rising in your breasts. O let not these wicked spirits enter in and dwell there !

Thus beset from without and disarmed within, you will be in great danger of falling. The horror you have conceived for sin will be apt soon to wear off ; your love of God and goodness to wax cold ; and your good resolutions to desert you,
and

and disappear like the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away.

But be not discouraged by these difficulties, nor let your hearts be troubled. Fear not, little Flock ; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. It is his gracious design to bring many sons unto glory : and if you be not wanting to yourselves, none shall pluck you out of his hands. His religion which teaches your duty, will enable you to perform it. The Gospel is a compleat rule of life. It not only enjoins you to be holy in all manner of conversation and godliness, but administers every needful help and instruction, to make you perfect and thoroughly furnished unto all good works. The precepts it delivers, have such a commanding force and beauty in them, and carry such conviction into the mind ; the character it prescribes as a model for your imitation, is so amiable, so excellent and godlike ; the exhortations it addresses to your love and gratitude, and to all the generous passions of the heart, are so affectionate and persuasive ; the motives it proposes to your hopes and fears, so great and alarming ; so glorious and tremendous ; so far more exceeding all that we can in thought or imagination conceive ; that nothing will be able to shake your virtue, while you keep these in view, or preserve the impression of them fresh in your minds.

And for this, religion hath likewise provided, in the spiritual exercises and sacred ordinances, which it has appointed. The ministry of the word

and sacraments in the church and congregation of the saints ; the observation of the sabbath, as a day of holy rest unto the Lord ; the assembling of ourselves together, to commemorate the gracious acts of the Lord, and to shew forth all his praise ; these are so many opportunities put into your hands of growing in grace, and in the knowledge and practice of all that is good.

Prayer is itself not only an indispensable duty incumbent upon all intelligent dependent Beings, and especially becoming fallen and sinful creatures ; but is likewise a call to every other duty ; a daily monitor to us, of the importance and necessity of a holy life. It is not only a call to duty, but a formal acknowledgment of our obligations, and a repeated vow and promise to perform it. You cannot confess your past sins to God without renouncing them for the future ; you cannot consistently pray that he would not lead you into temptation, without resolving to avoid and flee from it. When you ask forgiveness in the Lord's prayer, you solemnly engage to forgive every one his trespasses against you. Thus every prayer, if you attend to it, is a lesson of duty ; and is farther, a powerful assistance in the performance of it. By setting God before you, and carrying your thoughts into the other world, it will raise your affections above the things of this. By bringing every sin you have committed, and every duty you have neglected before your eyes ; it will warn you where your weakness and danger lies, and how best to guard yourselves for the future. But besides all this, it is the
certain

certain and appointed means of bringing God's blessing and assistance, to strengthen your weak endeavours, and to support and comfort you in all the severer trials of virtue. If ye being evil, saith our blessed Lord, give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.

The Sabbath is made a day of Rest from all your labours, not only that you may attend upon the Lord without distraction, but for your improvement in virtue and holiness of life; to give you leisure, and to make it a duty in you, to reflect on your spiritual concerns; to think on the motives and obligations to duty, and to apply these to your own circumstances and persons. The publick duty of the day, which you are religiously bound to attend, will not fail to bring all these to your thoughts, and will be the most powerful means to imprint a sense of them deeply and strongly on the mind. But besides this, it will be pious and prudent to allot a part of the remaining day to retirement and the closet: to examine the state of your minds; what your true character is, with respect to God and Religion; and what progress you have made, or whether you have gone back in the ways of virtue. This will strengthen and confirm your good resolutions, and have the happiest influence on your life and practice.

In the holy Communion, which it will be your duty henceforwards to attend, the great doctrines and motives of Religion are again brought, in all

their force and influence, before you. The love of God to mankind, in sending his Son into the world, that all who believe and obey him should have eternal life; the life and example, the sufferings and death of our blessed Lord, as they are here represented to your thoughts, will, if devoutly contemplated, raise in you every sentiment of love and duty to God your Redeemer and Sanctifier, as well as your Creator and Preserver; will fill you with a hatred and abhorrence of sin; will strengthen your faith and hope, and every virtuous and religious principle within you. The commemoration of Christ, our Lord and Lawgiver, our Mediator and Intercessor, under whatever character or relation we represent him to ourselves, carries in it some affecting motive, and is a powerful call to repentance, amendment and holiness of life.

Thus Religion trains up her sons, by exercise and diligence, to wisdom and virtue. The ordinances it enjoins, are a spiritual discipline, intended for the perfecting of the saints, and the edifying of the body of Christ: and which will not fail, if devoutly attended, to lead you on from strength to strength, until Christ, — until the christian life and temper be formed in you.

Let me then persuade you, to make the best use of these means of grace, and to be punctual in the observance of all your religious duties: and to apply them as they are designed, to your spiritual improvement in piety and every other virtue. Let every morning and evening be witness to the offering

ing up, in your prayers and praises, your whole heart and affections to God. Let nothing tempt you to profane his sabbath, or to absent yourselves from the publick service of the church : and be sure to dedicate some part of this day, to the communing with your own heart in private ; there to review your past conduct, and to arm yourselves with fresh resolutions to reform what has been amiss, and to supply every thing that has been defective in it. Be prepared with due solemnity, when you approach the table of the Lord, to offer and present yourselves, your souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto God. Encourage every sentiment of holy love and gratitude, that will then arise within you. And when you stand in the congregation amongst your brethren, whom God hath made your companions through this journey of life ; with whom you are united, as one body, in breaking the same bread of life, and drinking the same spiritual cup ; let every kind affection of charity and brotherly love take deep root, and prevail and rule in your hearts.

And let not these duties be thought a hard or unreasonable service. Experience will soon convince you, that they are easy and delightful in practice : and they will help to make every other duty easy and delightful. But if you resolve upon a life of virtue, you must resolve to use the means that are necessary to attain it. If you would arrive at christian perfection, you must build upon christian principles, and go the way to it which Christianity directs.

If you chuse the Lord for your God, and expect Heaven for your reward, you must use all diligence to work out your salvation, and to make your calling and election sure. You must indeed be prepared to sacrifice every thing to your duty, to submit every passion and appetite, the love of pleasure, the fear of pain, and every motion of self-love, to reason and conscience. But even the greatest of these difficulties, to minds well formed and disciplined, will appear little, and will be more than balanced by the pleasantness and peace, which ever attend the ways of wisdom and virtue. You will rejoice, if called to it, to suffer troubles and persecution, and thro' tribulation to enter into the kingdom of Heaven.

But in the ordinary course of things, a little care and attention in the early part of life, will make the yoke of religion always easy, and its burden always light. God hath formed our minds for virtue; hath made us naturally to love and reverence it. The first commission of sin is always a violence offered to our reason and conscience. And shame and remorse are the certain consequences attending it. If therefore we are careful to guard our innocence for a time, and cherish these seeds of virtue, our good dispositions will grow into habits; the principles of religion will become permanent, and rooted in the mind; our faith and trust in God will be ever awake and active in our breasts, ready to oppose to every temptation, and to give us the victory over the world. It is indeed to our own sloth and carelessness

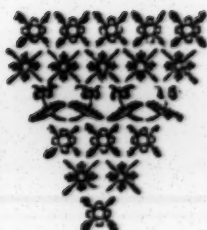
lessness that the temptations of the world owe most of their force and influence; and the greatest difficulties of virtue are generally of our own making. We suffer bad habits to grow up and get strength within us, and it is then difficult to reduce and conquer them. Our appetites and passions become inflamed and fortified by sinful indulgences, and then all our reason and resolution will be scarce sufficient to restrain them.

It is therefore of unspeakable consequence to guard the first years of your life from danger, till virtue has got the full possession, and established its empire over the heart. And this will make the rest of your duty a pleasure, and give joy and gladness to all your future days. For godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come. God is not a hard task-master, requiring unnecessary severities at our hands. His laws are wisdom and goodness; enjoining nothing but what is reasonable and excellent, and ornamental to our nature; nothing but what is good both for ourselves and others; nothing but what prudence and attention will make easy, and custom delightful in practice; which will secure us the approbation of our own hearts, and the love and esteem of the world about us; will bring down the blessing of God and his grace, to assist and support us here, and fit us for his kingdom of glory hereafter. On the other hand, if we desert the service of God, his grace and blessing will be withdrawn from us. All the joys of religion will forsake us, and guilt and anxiety succeed

ceed in their room. We shall forfeit all the purer pleasures of the mind, and gain only, in exchange for them, such as degrade and debase our nature ; such as bring shame and regret, pollution and defilement along with them, and leave a fearful looking-for of judgment behind them.

Be persuaded then, and resolved, to remember your Creator in the days of your youth. Let the best of your days, the flower of your age, the first fruits of your life be God's : and this will be an offering, the most worthy of him, and the most pleasing in his sight. Remember, that God is the Being with whom you have to do ; that with him alone you are to account, and with him must certainly account, for all your actions ; for every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. Remember, that you are not born for a day, but for eternity ; that this life is only your preparation for another, and that the more you do, and suffer here for righteousness sake, the greater will be your reward hereafter. Lastly, remember that for all the privileges, blessings and assistances, you have received from heaven, higher improvements in virtue will be expected from you. If, after all the vows and resolutions you have made, you yet fall from duty ; the guilt of every sin will be increased, and it will be more difficult hereafter, to renew yourselves again unto repentance. If you ever draw back from the service of God, his soul will have no pleasure in you. And therefore let me take my leave of you, with the solemn benediction and religious admonition,

tion, which *David* left as his last advice to his son *Solomon* : ‘ And now my Son, know thou the God of thy Fathers, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind : for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts ; if thou seek him, he will be found of thee ; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.’



P R A Y.

P R A Y E R S

F O R

Y O U N G P E R S O N S.

I Bow my knees before the God and Father of my Lord Jesus Christ, in a thankful sense of his grace and mercy, in calling me to be a member of his spiritual kingdom on earth; and blessing me with the hopes of his eternal kingdom in heaven. O that I may live worthy of this holy vocation wherewith I am called, of these immortal hopes which are placed before me!

Thou knowest, Lord, the very secrets of my heart, and with what sincerity, ardour, and true devotion, I offer up these thoughts unto thee. May thy grace and Holy Spirit be ever present with me to stablish, strengthen, settle, these resolutions within me. And let not thine abundant goodness be lost or bestowed in vain upon me: for then, better had it been that I had never known the Gospel of thy Son. O let me answer thy loving kindness and mercy, by a life of holiness, purity, and fervent charity; and by a perfect resignation of myself and all that is within me, to thy holy will in all things. Let me be ever
mindful

mindful of thy covenant, and of the vows which I have made to serve and obey thee. I have sworn, and I will perform it, to keep thy righteous judgments. May thy Sabbaths be my delight; and bless to me thy sacred ordinances, that by a constant attendance on the offices and holy communion of thy church, my thoughts and affections may be raised from earthly to heavenly objects; that my conscience may be awake to every call of duty; and that it may be my highest pleasure to please thee; my first and daily care never to offend thee.

O Lord God, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy servant, and stablish my heart unto thee. *Amen.*

A MORNING PRAYER.

O LORD, to whom I owe my life and every comfort of it, I most humbly pray that I may live always mindful of my dependence upon thee, and the mercies I have received from thee. May I consider that no action, word or thought of mine is unknown to thee; and therefore be at all times careful to think, to speak, and to do what is right. As I hope to be eternally happy, O let me seriously attend to those duties which must qualify me for being so. Grant that I may keep it always uppermost in my thoughts, that thy favour is only to be obtained

obtained by the holiness of my life, and by doing in it all the good in my power. Let it be ever in my heart to do all kind offices, and to promote peace and happiness among my neighbours. May I be true and faithful to all my engagements; especially to the promises and vows of obedience which I have made to thee—to govern my passions—to correct in myself every vicious inclination—to keep my body in temperance, soberness and chastity—to be true and just in all my dealings—and to do unto others what I should, in their case, expect them to do unto me. Give me health and strength cheerfully to go through the duties of my calling. Bless the labour of my hands, and accept of my honest industry, as a part of the duty I owe to thee, as well as to my family and country. Let no temptations of pleasure or of profit rob me of my honesty and virtue. In thy favour and the hope of thy eternal mercy I shall be happy in whatever station of life thou art pleased to place me. Let this hope be my comfort, my refuge and support in all circumstances; through *Jesus Christ* our Lord: in whose name and words, I pray for all mankind; *Our Father, &c.*

AN EVENING PRAYER.

O LORD, who hast preserved me this day, I bless thee for thus continuing thy care of, and goodness to me. Grant that I may shew my
thank-

thankfulness, by my sincere endeavours to perform thy will in all things. I most humbly beg forgiveness of every sin that I have committed; and it is likewise my most earnest prayer that I may never so dangerously deceive myself, as to think thou wilt forgive my sins, if I do not forsake them. Let it be my firmest belief that nothing can recommend me to thy favour, if I do not lead an holy and useful life; and that when I allow myself in any kind of guilt, even my prayers will be an abomination to thee. Give me grace so to live, as always in thy presence: and since all my actions and thoughts are known to thee, let me neither in deed or will be guilty of any thing that can displease thee. Enable me to improve in virtue and goodness; to correct in myself every bad habit, and to resist every vicious inclination. May nothing disturb my rest this night. Vouchsafe me such refreshing sleep, as may fit me for the duties of the following day. Thou alone knowest how near my death may be; and as every day brings me nearer to it, grant that I may become every day fitter for it. Prosper all who have done me good; pardon all who have designed me evil: and grant that we may at last meet in peace and love in thy everlasting kingdom, through *Jesus Christ* our Lord and Saviour; in whose name and words, I farther pray: *Our Father, &c.*

A Paraphrase upon the Lord's Prayer, to
be used in a Family or in Private.

ETERNAL Father, of whom the whole Family in Heaven and Earth is named, permit us among the children, to approach the throne of thy grace; to commit ourselves to thy protection; and to resign all our cares and interest into the hands of thy fatherly providence: may all thy creatures, whom thou hast made capable of worshipping and serving thee, adore with reverence thy infinite perfections; and consecrate all the powers and faculties of their nature to thy service. Grant that all mankind may come to the knowledge of thy true religion; that the kingdom of Christ may be extended over all the earth; and the eternal laws of piety, charity and temperance, be established throughout the whole world. Grant that all who profess this thy true religion, may live in perfect obedience to its laws: and as thou hast given us to aspire to heaven for our reward, let us make every heavenly virtue our aim; and endeavour after that perfection which thou hast made our model. We acknowledge in all things our dependence upon thee, and that every moment we subsist by thy bounty. Let thy good providence, which hath hitherto preserved us, be still our guide and support, supplying us with all things that are needful for us; that we may pass through this life without anxiety, and employ all our cares in preparing for a better. Let a sense of our own
infr-

infirmities, and of that mercy and compassion which we want and implore at thy hands, inspire us with meekness and humility, and with tenderness and compassion for the infirmities of each other: and pardon, we beseech thee, the many sins we have committed, the many neglects of our duty towards thee; as we from our hearts forgive those that have injured or offended against us. And assist us by thy grace, against all future temptations, whether of the world, the flesh, or the devil. Let no vain confidence in our own strength, tempt us to neglect those means which thou hast appointed to guard and strengthen our virtue. Let not our past iniquities provoke thee to withdraw thy Holy Spirit from us: but let thy providence work together with us, that by watchfulness and prayer, and the duties of religion, we may keep ourselves true to thy service, and from falling under the dominion of sin and satan: Thou that art the sovereign disposer of all events, and whose kingdom ruleth over all; from whose power all things have their beginning, and in whose glory all things end. *Amen.*

T H E E N D.

